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March 30, 2010

Mr. Bob Weiss  
Fiscal Research Division  
North Carolina General Assembly  
Suite 619, Legislative Office Building  
300 N. Salisbury Street  
Raleigh, NC 27603

RE: LAKE NORMAN RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION COMMENTS OF DIS-  
TRIBUTING TRANSPORTATION FUNDS (SL 2009-574 SECTION 4.4)

Dear Mr. Weiss,

I serve as Chairman of the Lake Norman Rural Planning Organization, which represents the northern and western portions of the Charlotte region. Our RPO represents approximately 346,000 citizens, and is comprised of a combination of rural, small town, and suburbanizing areas. Our TAC met on March 30, 2010 and developed the following comments in response to a request for comments on how the "Equity Formula" affects addressing transportation needs in the various parts of the state.

1. The Lake Norman RPO includes portions of I-40, I-77, and I-85. Interstates serve long-distance travel that affect the entire state. Such projects should be funded through a set-aside pot of money for such projects to compete against on a statewide basis, separate from the current Equity Formula. The Charlotte region currently contains five of the top six "Statewide Mobility" in North Carolina. The current congestion in our area reflects the lack of investment in these key arteries to our region and the entire state.
2. The Lake Norman RPO includes portions of NC 16, NC 18, NC 73, NC 150, US 74, US 70, and US 321; all of which are Strategic Highway Corridors. Projects on these routes should continue to receive priority when funding transportation projects.
3. RPOs and MPOs should be allocated a predetermined amount of money on an annual basis to fund transportation projects as determined by the RPO or MPO. This would be similar to the STP-DA program for larger MPOs. This money would be used to fund local or regional projects of high priority to the Lake Norman RPO.
4. The NCDOT should use the results of the SPOT program to guide funding allocations across the state, which would supersede the existing Equity Formula process of allocating money by "Funding Region." The Charlotte region, including the Lake Norman RPO, is poorly represented through the current allocation.
5. The NCDOT and Federal legislative delegation should actively advocate for a higher "return rate" of Federal motor fuel tax revenues.
6. The General Assembly should immediately eliminate all transfers out of the Highway Fund into the General Fund.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Michael Johnson  
Mayor Pro Tempore, City of Statesville  
Chairman, Lake Norman RPO

CC: Judge Robert Collier, NCDOT- Board of Transportation  
Lake Norman RPO TAC members